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AUTHOR Henry, Anne; Crawford, Caroline M.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the design and development of a World Wide Web site associated with a Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PT3) grant that was awarded to the University of Houston at Clear Lake (Texas) by the U.S. Department of Education. The Web site that created the electronic community (e-community) was to meet the needs and desires of numerous partners within the grant structure, such as the teacher candidates, mentor teachers, PreK-12 grade level students, school district administrators, university faculty, and grant team members. Through the graphic artist's design skills, the creation of metaphorically appropriate graphics for the Web site became an exemplary community building graphic mediator that offered visual support towards the creation of a Web-based community. (Author/MES)

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Authors: Anne Henry

Instructional Technology Center

University of Houston – Clear Lake

United States of America

henry@cl.uh.edu

Caroline M. Crawford

Instructional Technology

University of Houston-Clear Lake

United States of America

crawford@cl.uh.edu

C.M. Crawford

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Abstract:

The careful design and development of a World Wide Web site associated with a Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology grant that was awarded to the University of Houston at Clear Lake (UHCL) by the U.S. Department of Education was an exciting task. The Web site that created the electronic community (e-community) was to meet the needs and desires of numerous partners within the grant structure, such as the teacher candidates, mentor teachers, PreK-12 grade level students, school district administrators, university faculty and grant team members. Through the graphic artist's design skills, the creation of metaphorically appropriate graphics for the Web site became an exemplary community building graphic mediator that offered the visual support towards the creation of a Web-based community.

Manuscript:

Introduction

The design and development of an innovative World Wide Web site is time consuming and difficult, at best. However, when a Web site is associated with a three-year grant that encompasses a wide scope of persons associated with the readiness of teacher candidates

and their subsequent successful student-centered integration of technology within the learning environment, the Web site begins to take on the shape of an insurmountable task. The first decision was focused upon the activities to be included within the Web site. The Director of Technology for the University of Houston at Clear Lake (UHCL) PT3 grant, Caroline M. Crawford, desired to create an all-encompassing environment through which the teacher candidates, mentor teachers, PreK-12 school age children, university faculty and school district administrators could gain access to technology integration ideas at both the theoretical levels of understanding and the hands-on, practical levels of understanding. Therefore, a decision upon an appropriate metaphor must include all the factors associated with the grant and its desired recipients.

Crawford decided upon a "beehive" metaphor that would enhance the learning community's sense of working together for a joint cause, community of electronic learners (e-learners) where everyone is an expert in some topics but still have much to learn in others and, overall, a sense of hard work and fun. Desired associations with the beehive metaphor that would be integrated through out the Web site were "busy bee", "worker bee", "beehive" of activity and other such terms. The graphic designer for the grant's Web site, Ms. Anne Henry, would take these ideas and create an indelible imagery that would permeate the Web site and invite all who enter the site to become a part of the learning community.

Design

Henry took upon herself the task of creating the graphics in numerous appropriate formats, as the majority of the PT3 grant team was swimming in ideas but had little understanding of the graphic design and development process. Therefore, Henry diligently worked to create environments through which the appropriate display of professionalism and creativity were available. The design took on numerous slants, as the creative process sometimes tends to do. However, the idea of the "knowledge tree" and the "beehive of activity" became base aspects that were found to be metaphorically appropriate.

Development

During the unexpectedly lengthy and spiraling development time period, numerous PT3 grant team members offered viewpoints towards the design and development of the UHCL PT3 logo. The three initial designs that were offered to the PT3 grant team by Henry are presented below for a visual identity towards the metaphorical inclusion. The logo was the initial graphic representation of the metaphor that was to be later integrated into the UHCL PT3 Web site.

Three initial UHCL PT3 grant logos for review by the grant team.

After numerous versions of the logo during the development process, during which time the "tree of knowledge" metaphor was abandoned, the final two versions of the grant logo were presented to the PT3 grant team. Following are graphic representations of the two logos.

Two final UHCL PT3 grant logos for review by the grant team.

The UHCL PT3 grant team decided upon the use of the logo that impresses upon the reviewer the Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology grant that was awarded by the U.S. Department of Education. Without the PT3 grant, the time and efforts towards the success of this venture could not have been accomplished. However the logo with the larger bee and honeycombs, the one that was not chosen for the three-year grant period, would be useful once the grant's three-year time period was successfully completed.

Conclusions

Designing metaphorically appropriate graphics for a World Wide Web site takes an inordinate amount of time and energy but, most importantly, takes an extraordinary amount of skill. The graphic designer is the one artist upon whom the task lies and the successful implementation of the metaphor within the Web site directly depends upon the level of metaphorically appropriate graphics designed and developed for the Web site.

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Signature: Dr. Caroline M. Crawford	Printed Name/Position/Title: Caroline M Crawford, Assistant Professor
Organization/Address: University of Houston - Clear Lake 2700 Bay Area Blvd. Box 50 Houston, TX 77058-1098	Telephone: 281.283.3587 FAX: 281.283.3563 E-mail Address: crawford@cl.uh.edu Date: 01.31.02

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